for himself, but he did not seek mercy for them!

And Moses besought [wa-yehal] the Lord his God.[18] R. Eleazar said: This teaches that Moses stood in prayer before the Holy One, blessed be He, Until he [so to speak] wearied Him [hehelahu]. Raba said: Until he remitted His vow for Him. It is written here wa-yehal, and it is written there [in connection with vows], he shall not break [yahel] his word;[19] and a Master has said: He [himself] cannot break, but others may break for him.[20] Samuel says: It teaches that he risked his life for them,[21] as it says, And if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.[22] Raba said in the name of R. Isaac: It teaches that he caused the Attribute of Mercy to rest [hehelah] on them. The Rabbis say: It teaches that Moses said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, it is a profanation [hullin] for Thee to do this thing.

And Moses besought the Lord. It has been taught: R. Eliezer the Great says: This teaches that Moses stood praying before the Holy One, blessed be He, until an ahilu seized him. What is ahilu? R. Eleazar says: A fire in the bones. What is a fire in the bones? Abaye said: A kind of fever.

Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel Thy servants, to whom Thou didst swear by Thyself.[23] What is the force of 'by Thyself'? R. Eleazar said: Moses said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, hadst Thou sworn to them by the heaven and the earth, I would have said, Just as the heaven and earth can pass away, so can Thy oath pass away. Now, however, Thou hast sworn to them by Thy great name: just as Thy great name endures for ever and ever, so Thy oath is established for ever and ever.

And saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven and all this land that I have spoken of etc.[24] 'That I have spoken of'? It should be, 'That Thou hast spoken of'![25] — R. Eleazar said: Up to this point the text records the words of the disciple,[26] from this point the words of the master.[27] R. Samuel b. Nahmani, however, said: Both are the words of the disciple, only Moses spoke thus before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, the things which Thou didst tell me to go and tell Israel in Thy name I did go and tell them in Thy name; now what am I to say to them?

Because the Lord was not able [yekoleth].[28] It should be yakol![29] R. Eleazar said: Moses said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, now the nations of the world will say, He has grown feeble like a female and He is not able to deliver. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Moses: Have they not already seen the wonders and miracles I performed for them by the Red Sea? He replied: Sovereign of the Universe, they can still say, He could stand up against one king, He cannot stand up against thirty. R. Johanan said: How do we know that in the end the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Moses right? Because it says, And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word.[30] It was taught in the school of R. Ishmael: According to thy word: the nations of the world will one day say, Happy is the disciple to whom the master gives right!

But in very deed, as I live.[31] Raba said in the name of R. Isaac: This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Moses, you have revived Me[32] with your words.

R. Simlai expounded: A man should always first recount the praise of the Holy One, blessed be He, and then pray. Whence do we know this? From Moses; for it is written, And I besought the Lord at that time,[33] and it goes on, O Lord God, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy strong hand; for what god is there in heaven and earth who can do according to Thy works and according to Thy mighty acts, and afterwards is written, Let me go over, I pray Thee, and see the good land etc.

(Mnemonic: Deeds, charity, offering, priest, fast, lock, iron].[34]